

Architectural Pioneer Honored by USPS

The 38th stamp in the USPS Black Heritage series honors architect and educator Robert Robinson Taylor (1868-1942). The release date is February 12, 2015, the official First Day site is Washington, D.C., the stamp is a First-Class Mail Forever stamp, and the format is a pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) pane of 20 stamps.

For more than three decades, Taylor supervised the design and construction of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama while also overseeing the school's programs in industrial education and the building trades.

He is believed to have been both the first black graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the country's first academically trained black architect. Through his calm leadership and quiet dignity, he earned the admiration of colleagues and students alike while expanding opportunities for African Americans in fields that had largely been closed to them.

In 1892, after graduating from MIT, Taylor, accepted an offer from educator and activist Booker T. Washington to teach at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where he soon set about shaping the appearance of the burgeoning school. Over the course of nearly 40 years, Taylor designed dozens of essential buildings, including libraries, dormitories, lecture halls, industrial workshops, and a handsome chapel, transforming a makeshift campus on an abandoned plantation into a confident, state-of-the-art institution.

Taylor's work as a teacher and administrator was equally vital to



the Tuskegee mission. While overseeing programs to train skilled artisans, he also established a curriculum with a certificate to help graduates enter collegiate architecture programs or earn entry-level positions at firms. His work furthered Booker T. Washington's dream of fostering not just African-American builders and carpenters, but architects who could plan the buildings as well.

In 1940 Booker T. Washington was the first African American to be honored on a U.S. stamp. Initiated in 1978, with a stamp honoring Harriet Tubman, the USPS Black Heritage Series recognizes the achievements of prominent African Americans and has featured outstanding individuals in a variety of fields, including science, technology, medicine, education, the arts, sports, government, and social activism.

Art director Derry Noyes designed the Robert Robinson Taylor stamp, which features a photograph of Taylor taken circa 1890, when he was around 22 years old and a student at MIT.

For first day covers, the usual rules apply. Purchase the stamps from the USPS or a stamp dealer, affix them to envelopes of choice addressed to yourself or others and send them in an outer envelope to Robert Robinson Taylor Stamp, Special Events, PO Box 92282, Washington, DC 20090-2282. You may also want to include an outer envelope addressed to yourself for return of you covers to protect them from damage in the mail or double cancellation. All covers must be sent to the USPS by April 13, 2015.